Mrs George Catt. 8

WHAT TIME IS IT?

BEING THOUGHTS ON ROM. XIII. 12.

BY THE

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"I believe you are as sensible as I, that it is still night: but the comfort is, it draws nigh towards that bright morning that shall make amends."

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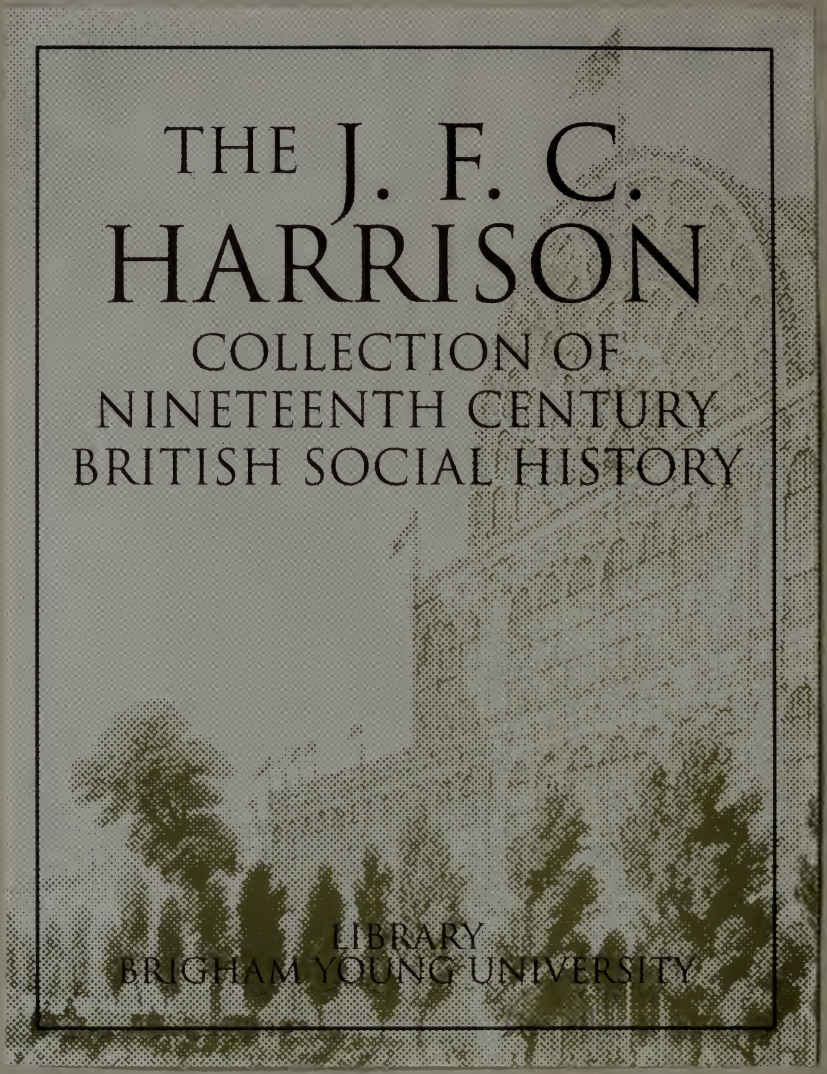
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WHAT TIME IS IT?

"*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*"

ROM. XIII. 12.

READER,

You probably know the story of St. Paul's shipwreck. (Acts xxviii.) You remember how the apostle and his companions were exceedingly tossed with a tempest for thirteen days. Neither sun nor stars in many days appeared. All hope that they should be saved was taken away. But do you recollect that when the fourteenth night was come, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country? They sounded and found it twenty fathoms. When they had gone a little further they sounded again and found it fifteen fathoms. Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. Think what an anxious night that must have been! How often some of the 276 souls on board the great Alexandrian corn-ship must have said, How goes the night? *What time is it?*

You have probably heard of the battle of Waterloo. You know that the Duke of Wellington fought that battle on the understanding that the Prussians would come up on the left of his army, and help him against the French. But the way was long. The roads were bad. The evening was drawing on before the Prussians could appear on the field. In the mean time the battle increased. Hour after hour our forces were thinned by the furious attacks of the enemy. One gallant man after another was slain or carried away wounded. Think what an anxious afternoon that must have been! How often the sun and the shadows must have been observed! How often the watch must have been consulted, and the general's eye turned to the left! How often the anxious question must have risen in men's minds, *What time is it?*

You have probably attended the sick-bed of some whom you tenderly loved. You have seen them hovering between life and death, and have passed weeks of painful suspense. You have sat by and watched the struggle between the body and its infirmities, and felt the miserable helplessness of not being able to do anything but look on. And do you not know how slowly the hours roll on at a time like this? Have not the clocks and watches seemed to stand still, and the sun appeared to have forgotten to rise? Have you not often said, When will the physician come again? Will the morning never come? *What time is it?*

Reader, you and I are in a world which is rapidly rolling on towards the day of judgment. There is an hour before us all when the earth and its works shall be b urned up, and the inhabitants thereof shall all

stand before the bar of Christ. There is a day to come whose issues are of far more importance than those of shipwreck, battle, or disease. Surely it becomes us all to think of that day. Are we ready for it? Is it possible that we may live to see it? Is it near, or is it far off? *What time is it?*

Come with me this day and consider the thoughts of an inspired apostle on this solemn subject. He says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on us the armour of light." These words ought to come home to our consciences like the blast of a trumpet. They ought to rouse our sleeping minds to a sense of the eternal realities which are before us. They call upon us to lay aside all trifling, lingering, and carelessness about our Christianity. They summon us to a close walk with God.

There are four things brought before my mind by the words just quoted.

I. You have here *the present condition of the world,*—It is night.

II. You have *the condition of the world which is yet to come,*—It will be day.

III. You have *the particular time in which our lot is cast,*—The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

IV. You have *the duty of all believers who know the time,*—They ought to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

Upon each of these four points I have something to say.

I. First of all let us consider the present condition of the world.

The apostle Paul calls it "night." "The night," he says, "is far spent."

I have no doubt that word seems strange to some persons. They think it wonderful that the year 1854 should be called "night." They are living in days of learning, science, civilization, commerce, freedom, and knowledge. They see around them things which their forefathers never dreamed of,—railways, manufactories, gas, electricity, steam-engines, education for all, and cheap books. I know it all, and am thankful for it. Nevertheless I say that in the things of God the world is still in a state of "night."

I believe that God looks down on this globe of our's as it rolls round the sun, and as He looks upon it, He pronounces it "very dark."

I believe that the angels go to and fro and make report of all they see on our earth, and their constant report is, "very dark."

And I am sure that believers in the Lord Jesus in every land are of one mind on this subject. They cry and sigh for the abominations they see around them. To them the world appears "very dark."

Is it not dark *in heathen lands?* There are two-thirds of the whole world in open rebellion against God and His Christ. Two out of every three inhabitants of the globe have no Bible, no Gospel, no knowledge, no faith, no hope. They are cruel, deceitful, immoral, unclean, earthly, sensual, devilish, idolatrous, superstitious. Surely that is night.

Is it not dark *in many professedly Christian countries?* There are two-thirds of all the professing Christians on earth who are unsound in the faith. Their religion is not simply scriptural. They have added many things which are not to be found in the Bible. They have left out many things which the Bible has plainly commanded. There are millions who give honour to the Virgin and saints instead of Christ. There are millions of baptized people who know nothing of the Bible, and have not the slightest idea of the salvation contained in the Gospel. Surely that is night.

Is it not dark in *our own country* at this present day? How much of sin there is in Protestant Britain, and how little of God! How much of open infidelity, heathenish ignorance, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, swearing, cheating, lying, covetousness, is weekly crying against us before the Lord of Hosts! How many people in Great Britain go to no place of worship at all! How many go to church and chapel merely as a form! How few are really in earnest about the salvation of their souls! How few have any evidence to shew of a saving faith in Christ, and a real work of the Spirit in their hearts! Surely even among ourselves it is night.

Is there not *much darkness under the eyes of every true believer?* Go to the most godly, quiet, and orderly parish in our land at this moment. Ask any well-informed child of God residing in it, how many true Christians it contains, and what is the proportion of the converted to the unconverted. Mark well the answer he will give. I doubt if you will find a parish in Great Britain where one third of the people are converted. And if such be the report

of parishes which are like the green tree, what must be the state of things in the dry. Surely it is night.

Reader, it is useless to deny these things. Humbling as it may be to the pride of human nature, the word of the apostle is strictly true,—*the time present is night.* An unconverted man may not perceive it. A graceless man may not comprehend it. The blind eye sees no difference between noon and midnight. The deaf ear makes no distinction between discord and sweet music. The mortified limb has no feeling either of heat or cold. But I do believe that God's children can enter into the meaning. The people of the Lord Jesus Christ find by experience that it is night.

It is a *cold time* to believers. They meet with much to chill and damp their zeal, and little to cheer and warm their hearts. They have to put up with many crosses and disappointments. They see iniquity abounding, and their own love is apt to become cold. And why? It is night.

It is a *lonely time* to believers. They find little company on the way that leads to heaven. Here and there they fall in with one who loves the Lord Jesus, and lives by faith. A few of God's children may be found in one town and a few in another. But on the whole the children of the world seem like the Syrian army, which filled the country, and the children of God are like a few scattered sheep in a wilderness. And why? It is night.

It is a *dangerous time* to believers. They often stumble, and scarcely discern their path. They often stand in doubt, and know not which way to turn. They sometimes see not their tokens, and lose

sight of their land-marks. At best they travel on in continual fear of enemies. And why? It is night.

Reader, I ask you to ponder these things. If time present be night, you will not wonder if we ministers warn Christians to watch and pray. You will count it no strange thing if we tell you to live like soldiers in an enemy's country, and to be always on your guard.

Reader, sit down and ask yourself whether you find this world in which you live to be night or day. Is time present a time of conflict or a time of ease? Do you feel that your best things are here in this life, or that your best things are yet to come? I offer these questions to you as a test of your spiritual state. I place them before you as a gauge and measure of your soul's condition. I tell you plainly, if you never found this world a wilderness and place of darkness, it is an evil sign of your state in the sight of God. The true believer will find the words of his crucified Lord to be strictly true, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." (John xvi. 33.) The true believer, like his Lord and Master, will be made perfect through sufferings. The true believer will mourn over the world he lives in as a world in rebellion against its rightful king. Sin will grieve him. Ungodliness will make him heavy of heart. Like Lot in Sodom, his righteous soul will be daily vexed with much that he sees and hears. He will long for the time when the day shall dawn, and the shadows flee away. For the present he will feel it is night.

Reader, is it your night or day?

II. Let us consider, in the second place, the condition of the world which is yet to come.

The apostle Paul calls it "day." "The day is at hand."

The time here spoken of is the time to which every true Christian ought to look forward,—it is the time when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again. The present state of things in the Church of Christ shall undergo a mighty change,—a change so great that it shall be like the turning of night into day.

The world we live in is not to go on always as it does now. The darkness of sin, ignorance, and superstition is not always to cover the earth. The sun of righteousness shall one day rise with healing in his wings. The Lord Jesus shall come again with power and great glory. He shall return on the morning without clouds, and then it shall be "day."

There is a time coming when the devil shall be bound, and shall no longer rule in this world. Sin and all its consequences shall be cast out. The groaning creation shall rest at length. The wicked shall be shut up for ever in their own place. The saints of the Most High shall at length possess the kingdom. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Surely that will be "day."

There is a time coming when believers shall have joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee far away. Every tear shall be wiped, every cross laid down, every anxiety removed, every bitter cup taken away. Persecution, temptation, sickness, mourning, parting, separation, and death, shall be at end. Surely that will be sunshine. It will be "day."

There is a time coming when the whole family of Christ shall be gathered together. They shall rise

from their narrow beds and put on a glorious body. They shall awake from their long sleep refreshed, strengthened, and far more beautiful than when they lay down. They shall leave behind them in their graves every imperfection, and meet without spot or wrinkle, to part no more. Surely that will be a joyful morning. It will be "day."

There is a time coming when believers shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. They shall see as they have been seen, and know as they have been known. They shall cease to wrangle and dispute about outward matters, and shall think of nothing but eternal realities. They shall behold their crucified Lord and Saviour with the eye of sense, and no longer follow Him by faith. They shall see one another free from all corruption, and misunderstand one another's motives and conduct no more. Surely that will be "day."

I see here great comfort for every believer in Christ who reads these pages. *There is a day before you, a glorious day.* You sometimes feel now as if you walked in darkness and had no light. You have often a hard battle to fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil. You sometimes fancy you will never win your way home, and must faint by the way. Your flesh and heart are ready to fail. You are sorely tempted to give up and sit down in despair. But take comfort in the thought of things yet to come. There is a good time before you. Your day has yet to dawn.

I see here great reason why many professing Christians should tremble and be afraid. There are many, too many I fear, to whom the time to come

will be anything but day. There are many whose happiness is evidently all below, whose treasure is all on earth, whose brightest time is now, and whose gloomiest prospects are hereafter. The further they look on, the darker everything appears. Old age looks dark,—sickness looks darker still,—death and judgment look darkest of all.

Beloved reader, if this be your case, I warn you plainly there must be a change. Your views, your tastes, your inclinations, your affections must be renewed and transformed. You must learn to view the world that now is and that which is to come in a very different light. Go and sit at the feet of Jesus, and ask Him to teach you this lesson. Ask for the enlightening Spirit to anoint your eyes that you may see. Ask for the veil to be taken away, that you may behold everything in its true colours.

I know well that Satan labours hard to prevent men thinking of a better world than that in which we now live. He strives to turn away their eyes from the coming day. He would fain persuade them that it is impossible to do their duty in this life, and at the same time to set their affections on things above. He whispers to people that we ministers want them to become gloomy hermits, and fanatical misanthropes, and that if they listen to us they will become unfitted for all the relations of life. Against all suggestions of Satan I warn every reader to be on his guard.

I bid no one neglect the duties of his station, or forsake the post which God has called him to fill. I encourage no one in moroseness and churlishness, as if there was nothing to be thankful for in this world.

I praise no one who refuses his affections to those with whom he is united by love, friendship, and relationship. I only ask that the believer in the New Testament should live by a New Testament standard,—that he should look for the coming of the day of God, and wait for the Son of God from heaven, and love his Lord's appearing.

Reader, I abhor all extravagance and fanaticism on the subject of things to come. I have no opinion of any religion which makes a man neglect his business, or cease to love wife, children, relations, and friends. I only ask that we should take scriptural views of things as they are, and things as they yet will be. I ask that we should see our present evils and mourn over them, that we should see our future good things and long for them. Let us honestly confess that sin is around us, and long to be delivered from its presence. Let us honestly confess that holiness is one day to spread over the earth, and long for it to come. Let us never be ashamed to allow that it is "night," and that we want it to be "day."

Tell me, can that man really hate sin, who does not desire to see it swept away from the earth? Can that man love holiness who does not long for the time when all shall know the Lord? Can that man be truly united to Christ by faith who does not wish to see Christ, and to be with Him? Can that man be a saint who does not thirst after the unmixed company of just men made perfect? Can that man be in earnest who daily prays, "Thy kingdom come," and yet is content that the world should go on as it is without any change? Oh! no! no! These things

are impossible. God's true children will want to be at home. They will wish for the day.

Reader, if you mean to be saved, you must learn to view time present as "night," and time to come as "day." You must learn to regard the other side of Jordan as the home of your soul, and this side as a desert land. Time present must be your wilderness, your battle field, your place of trial,—time to come must be your Canaan, your rest, your Father's house,—or else you had better never have been born.

III. In the third place, let us consider the particular times in which our lot is cast.

The apostle Paul tells us, when he says, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

I believe these words mean that the last order of things has arrived, the last stage in the history of the Church has come. The law and the prophets have done their work. The Messiah promised at the fall has appeared and provided a complete salvation. The last revelation of God's will has been made. The way of life has been laid open to all mankind. No further message from heaven to earth is to be expected before the end. No more books of Scripture are to be written. We have reached the last watch of the night. We have nothing to expect now but the sun-rise and the morning.

Reader, these words, which were true eighteen hundred years ago, are, if possible, more true at the present time. They are words which should come home with increasing power to the Church of Christ every year.—"The night is far spent: the day is at hand."

I am one of those who think "the day" may not be so far off as some seem to suppose. I am unable to put away the idea of the Lord's return in glory as an event which "of course" cannot be in our times, as some men say. I rather think I see tokens of the sun being near the horizon. At all events I desire to keep in special remembrance St. James's words, "The Judge standeth before the door,"—"the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," and St. Peter's words, "the end of all things is at hand." (James v. 8. 9. 1 Peter iv. 7.)

I am no prophet, and may easily be mistaken. I may die and you may die before Christ comes and the day dawns. But I appeal to every thinking man whether there are not "signs of the times" which deserve serious attention. I ask him to notice the things going on in the world, and to consider well what they are intended to teach.

Does any reader ask what I mean by "signs of the times?" Let him weigh well the six following points, and he will see what I mean.

1. What shall we say to the *missions to the heathen* which have been set on foot in these latter days? Sixty years ago the Protestant Churches seemed thoroughly asleep on the subject of missions. There was hardly a single missionary sent forth to the heathen from the whole of Great Britain. The idea of preaching the Gospel to savages and idolaters was ridiculed. The first promoters of missions were treated coldly by many who ought to have known better. But now the feeling is completely changed. We are employing hundreds of missionaries in every

quarter of the globe. And what saith the Scripture, "The Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. xxiv. 14.)

2. What shall we say to the surprising *interest taken in the Jewish nation* in these latter days? Sixty years ago to be a Jew was a taunt, and a bye-word, and a proverb. No man cared for the souls of the children of Abraham. They were a people despised, and scorned, and trampled under foot. It might truly have been said, "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after." (Jerem. xxx. 17.) But now the feeling is completely changed. The spiritual interests of Jews are a subject of deep concern to true Christians. The civil rights of Jews are cared for even to an extreme. The very city of Jerusalem has weight in the councils of kings. Yet what saith the Scripture? "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory." (Psalm cii. 13—16.)

3. What shall we say to the wonderful *spread of knowledge and communication between nations* in these days? Sixty years ago to find a poor man who could read, was an uncommon thing. In a few years a man who cannot read will be a rare sight. Sixty years ago there were few who ever travelled

beyond the bounds of their own county. Now every one can move in every direction, and our population is like a swarm of bees disturbed. Steam navigation and railways have altered the character of society. Time and space are made nothing of. Seas, mountains, and rivers are no longer obstacles. God separated the nations in the day of Babel. Man is working hard to make them all one again. And what saith the Scripture? "Shut up the words and seal the book, turn to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel xii. 4.)

4. What shall we say to the *wars and shakings of nations* which we have seen in these last sixty years? The mightiest empires on earth have been shaken to their very foundations. Kings, and princes, and great men, have been driven from their high position by scores, and made wanderers on the face of the earth. There has been no accounting for it by any human reasoning. These movements have taken place in the face of increased knowledge, civilization, and desire of peace. The shock came from beneath. And what saith the Scriptures? "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine and pestilence and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matt. xxiv. 7, 8.)

5. What shall we say to *the drying up of the Mahometan power?* Two hundred and fifty years ago, men doubted whether the Turks might not overrun Europe. No army seemed able to resist them.

Province after province fell into their hands. When Martin Luther in his sermons wanted an illustration of boundless worldly power, he would choose for his example "the Turkish empire." But now all is changed. Without much outward violence the Mahometan strength has gradually dwindled away. There has been a collapse, a consumption, a worm at the heart of all their might. In spite of all the help of Christian allies, the Turkish empire is like a man sick of a sore disease. He may rally for a time by the help of strong remedies, and the admission of new elements into his constitution, but he will never again be an exclusive, persecuting, purely Mahometan power. The days of pure, intolerant Mahometanism seem past and gone for ever. And what saith the Scripture? I quote symbolical prophecy with reverence, and readily allow I may be wrong in its application; but the passage is very remarkable. "The sixth angel poured out his vial on the river Euphrates; and the waters thereof were dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Rev. xvi. 12—15.)

6. What shall we say to the *increased attention to*

unfulfilled prophecy, which has appeared in these latter days? Sixty years ago there were few who paid any attention to the subject. The passages in Scripture which speak of things to come were comparatively neglected, or perverted with curious ingenuity from their simple meaning. Now, on the contrary, the current of public feeling runs strongly in favour of prophetical study. Books on the subject are eagerly bought up. Lectures on the subject are listened to with increased attention. In spite of the divisions which preterism and futurism* have created, —in spite of the discredit which Millerites in America and Irvingites in England have brought upon the whole subject, the study of unfulfilled prophecy still holds its ground. But what saith the Scriptures? "The words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." (Dan. xii. 9.) The words seem unfolding. The seal seems breaking. Can the end be far off?

Reader, I place these points before you, and ask your serious attention to them. I know we are all poor judges of our own times. We are apt to exaggerate the importance of events that take place under our own eyes. I dare say if we had lived in Cromwell's days, or under the first French revolution, we should have thought the end of all things was at hand. But still, after every allowance, I think the points I have mentioned deserve solemn consideration. I regard them as signs of our times.

* *Preterism* is the system of prophetical interpretation, which considers the greater part of the prophecies in Revelation, as fulfilled and past already. *Futurism* is the system which considers the same prophecies to be as yet unfulfilled.

I am far from saying that there may not be wonderful changes yet before the end. I think it possible there may be a time of trouble and conflict yet, "such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. xii. 1.) I believe there may yet be tribulation for the people of God, "such as was not since the beginning of the world." (Matt. xxiv. 21.) But come what will, I see a deep meaning in the words, "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

I see in these words the *strongest motive for diligence* in the work of doing good to souls. Let us make more haste to spread the Gospel over the world. Let us take more pains in endeavouring to sow truth at home. Let us labour, if possible, to pluck more brands from the burning. The time is short. The night is far spent: The day is at hand.

I see in these words the *strongest consolation* for the believer in Christ Jesus. Oh! for a heart to lay hold on it more and more.

Yet a little while, and believers shall part for ever with *disease*. The sick and wearied ones, who have mourned over their seeming uselessness to the church,—the weak and infirm, who have had the will to labour, but not the power,—the feeble and bedridden, who have waited long-drawn years in quiet chambers, till their eyes know every crack and speck on their walls,—all, all shall be set free. They shall each have a glorious body like their Lord's.

Yet a little while, and mourning believers shall part for ever with their *tears*. Every wound in their hearts shall be completely healed. Every empty place and gap in their affections shall be entirely filled up. They shall find that those who have died in the

Lord were not lost, but gone before. They shall see that infinite wisdom arranged every bereavement, by which one was taken and another left. They shall magnify the Lord together with those who were once their companions in tribulation, and acknowledge that He did all things well, and led them by a right way.

Yet a little while, and believers shall no more feel that they are *alone*. They shall no longer be scattered over the earth, a few in one place, and a few in another. They shall no longer lament that there are so few to speak to, as a man speaketh with his friend,—so few who are of one mind, and travel with them in the one narrow way. They shall be united to the general assembly and church of the first-born. They shall join the blessed company of all the believers of every name, and people, and tongue. Their eyes shall at length be satisfied with seeing. They shall see a multitude of saints that none can number, and not one wicked person among them.

Yet a little while, and working believers shall find that their *labour was not in vain*. The ministers who have preached, and seemed to reap no fruit,—the missionaries who testified of the Gospel, and none seemed to believe,—the teachers who poured into children's minds line upon line, and none seemed to attend,—all, all shall discover that they have not spent their strength for nought. They shall find that the seed sown can spring up after many days, and that sooner or later in all labour there is profit.

Ah! reader, when shall these things be? Truly we may say, "Lord God, thou knowest." A thousand years in His sight are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. But we do know that yet a

little while he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Yet a little while, and the last sermon shall be preached,—the last congregation break up. Yet a little while, and carelessness, and infidelity shall cease, perish, and pass away. The believers among us will be with Christ, and the unbelievers will be in hell. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

IV. And now in the last place, let me speak of the practical duty of all believers connected with the truths we have just considered.

That practical duty is put before us in plain words, —"Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

Reader, the word "therefore" is often used by the apostle Paul in a very striking and forcible way. Take a few examples, and you will at once see what I mean.

When he finishes the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans, and begins his practical exhortation, what is his language? "I beseech you *therefore* by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." (Rom. xii. 1.)

When he has preached the resurrection of the body to the Corinthians, how does he wind up his argument? "*Therefore* my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable." (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

When he has laid a mighty foundation of doctrine for the Ephesian Church, how does he proceed to address them on practical duties? "I *therefore*, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy

of the vocation wherewith ye are called." (Ephes. iv. 1.)

And here, as in other places, the word "therefore" comes in upon us in a very searching and forcible way. "The night is far spent and the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness."

Reader, I love to observe how closely the doctrine of Christ's second coming and kingdom is bound up with personal holiness. I marvel that any can regard the second advent and reign of the Lord Jesus as merely speculative matters, or denounce them as unprofitable subjects. To my own mind they seem eminently practical, or else I have read my Bible to very little purpose.

Does not the apostle Paul say to the Philippians, "Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand." (Phil. iv. 5.) Does he not say to the Colossians, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." (Col. iii. 2—5.) Does not he bid the Hebrews to "Exhort one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." (Heb. x. 25.) Does not St. Peter say, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore beloved seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless." (2 Peter iii. 13, 14.) These texts appear to me to speak with no uncertain voice. I know not how their force can be evaded. They make the coming

of Christ, and the day of glory, an argument for increased holiness. And it is just in the same way that St. Paul says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

Reader, how are you to "cast off the works of darkness?" Listen to me, and I will tell you.

You ought to lay aside everything in your life and habits which will not bear the light of Christ's appearing. You ought to make it a principle of conscience to do nothing you would not like to be found doing when Jesus comes again to gather His people together.

This is a searching test indeed. The application of it must be left to every man's own heart. Each must judge for himself. Each must prove his own works. Each must set up an assize within him, and honestly bring his ways to a trial. Oh! for a will to deal fairly and justly with ourselves! Oh! for a daily readiness to judge ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord, and condemn ourselves that we be not condemned at the last day!

I ask every reader of this tract to bring the light of the day of Christ to bear upon his inner man. Set your years, and months, and weeks, and days, and hours in the full blaze of that day, and whatever thing you find within which is akin to darkness, pluck it out and cast it away. Keep up no questionable habit. Make no compromise with doubtful practices. Break down every idol, whether great or small. Cut down every grove, and cleanse out every chamber of imagery. Cling to nothing which would cost you a blush under the eye of Christ. Away with it at once, lest He come suddenly and put you to shame! Oh! that

He may never say of any reader's heart in that day, "This heart professed to be a temple of the Holy Ghost, but thou hast made it a den of thieves."

Reader, try all your employment of time by the test of Christ's second coming. Place in this balance your amusements, your books, your companions, your manner of conversation, your daily behaviour in all the relations of life. Measure all by this measure,—"The night is far spent and the day is at hand. Am I living as a child of the night, or as one who looks for the day?" Do this, and you will cast off the works of darkness.

But how are you to put on the armour of light? Listen to me once more, and I will tell you.

You ought to aim at every grace and habit which becomes a believer in Christ, and a child of God, and a citizen of a heavenly kingdom. You ought not to leave eminent holiness and spirituality to a few, as if none but a few favoured ones could be eminent saints. You ought to labour to wear the armour of light yourself, the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of hope, and the sword of the Spirit. (Ephes. vi. 14—17.) Wherever you may live, and whatever may be your trials,—however great your difficulties, and however small your helps,—nothing should prevent your aiming at the highest standard, to behave like one who believes that Christ is coming again.

You should resolve, by God's help, so to live, that the day of Christ shall find you needing as little change as possible. You should seek to have tastes so heavenly,—affections so spiritual,—a will so subdued,—a mind so unworldly, that when the Lord

appears you may truly be in tune for His kingdom. Verily it was a fine saying of Dr. Preston, on his death-bed, "I go to change my place but not my company."

Ah! reader, I fear that some believers will be far less ready for the day of Christ than others. I suspect that some will have a far more abundant entrance into heaven than their brethren,—more boldness, more confidence, more felt readiness for the company of their Lord. Oh! that every one into whose hands this tract may fall may so walk with God, that like Enoch, he may be only translated from a lower degree of communion to a higher,—from walking by faith to walking by sight. This would be putting on the armour of light.

Let there be light in your heart continually, Christ dwelling there by faith,—felt, known, and experienced by your soul. Let there be light in your life continually, Christ reflected there, followed, imitated, and copied. Seek to be a light in the world, and nothing less,—a bright light, a clear light, a light that men can see afar off. Do this, and you will put on the armour of light.

Live as if you thought Christ might come at any time. Do everything as if you did it for the last time. Say everything as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again. Pray every prayer as if you felt it might be your last opportunity. Hear every sermon as if you were hearing once and for ever. This is the way to be found ready. This is the way to turn Christ's second appearing to good account. This is the way to put on the armour of light.

1. And now perhaps this tract has fallen into the hands of *some careless, thoughtless, unconverted person*. Reader, are you that man? Then, remember these words, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

What are you doing? You eat, you drink, you sleep, you dress, you work, you buy, you sell, you laugh, you read, but you do nothing for your soul. Hell is opening its mouth for you, and you are careless. Christ is coming to judge the world and you are unprepared. Time hurries on and you are not ready for eternity. Oh! awake to a sense of your danger and repent this day. Awake and call upon your God before it is too late to pray. Awake and seek the Lord Jesus Christ before the door is shut, and the day of wrath begins. Alas! you may be thought wise and clever in this world, but living as you do you act the part of a madman.

2. But perhaps this tract has fallen into the hands of one who is *undecided and halting between two opinions*. Reader, are you that man? Then remember these words, "The night is far spent and the day is at hand."

What are you doing? You hear, you listen, you wish, you desire, you mean, you intend, you hope, you resolve, but you go no further. You see the ark, but you will not go in. You see the bread of life, but you do not eat it. You wait. And yet time gets on. The devil is saying over you, "I shall have this soul before long." Oh! come out from the world and linger no more. Take up the cross. Cast away vain excuses. Confess Christ before men.

Beware, I say, lest you make up your mind too late. Again I say, beware.

3. But perhaps this tract has fallen into the hands of some *true believer*. Reader, are you that man? Then remember these words, "The night is far spent and the day is at hand."

I ask you to live as if you believed the words we have been considering, and so shew the world you think them true. The nearer you draw to home, the more wakeful you ought to be. The more you realize the second personal coming of the Lord Jesus, the more lively ought your Christianity to be.

Ah! reader, it is but too true, as Legh Richmond said on his death-bed, "We are but half awake! We are but half awake!" The best of us need to have our hearts stirred up by way of remembrance. Let us rub the sleepy eyes of our mind, and look the speedy coming of our Master full in the face. Let the time past suffice us to have been drowsy and lazy servants. For the time to come let us work like those who feel, "The Master will soon be here."

I remember when I was a school-boy I could wake up, however tired with a long journey, when I begun to draw near home. Soon as I saw the old hills, and trees, and chimnies, the sense of weariness was gone, and I was all alive. The prospect of soon seeing much-loved faces,—the joy of thinking of a family gathering, all this was able to drive sleep away. Surely it ought to be the same with us in the matter of our souls. The night is far spent and the day is at hand. Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Then let us cast off

every work of darkness. Let us put on the whole armour of light. Let us be ashamed of our past drowsiness. Let us awake, and sleep no more.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

Helmingham, Stoneham,
Oct., 1854.

HYMN.

The church has waited long,
Her absent Lord to see;
And still in loneliness she waits,
A friendless stranger she.
Age after age is gone,
Sun after sun has set;
And still in weeds of widowhood,
She weeps a mourner yet.

Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

Saint after saint on earth,
Has lived, and loved, and died;
And as they left us one by one,
We laid them side by side.
We laid them down to sleep,
But not in hope forlorn;
We laid them but to ripen there,
'Till the last glorious morn.

Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

The serpent's brood increase,
The powers of hell grow bold,
The conflict thickens, faith is low,
And love is waxing cold.
How long, O Lord, our God,
Holy, and true, and good,
Wilt thou not judge thy suffering church,
Her sighs, and tears, and blood?

Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

We long to hear Thy voice,
To see Thee face to face,
To share Thy crown and glory then,
As now we share Thy grace.
Should not the loving Bride
The absent Bridegroom mourn?
Should she not wear the weeds of grief
Until her Lord return?

Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

The whole creation groans,
And waits to hear that voice,
That shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.
Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain,
And make this blighted world of our's,
Thine own fair world again!

Come then, Lord Jesus, come!

H. BONAR.

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